



Mayor Jan Pepper's Statement on Black Lives Matter

June 9 City Council Meeting

The last couple weeks have been a tumultuous time in our country and in our community. It highlights how very far we still have to go to fight racism in this country. I want to make it clear that I firmly support Black Lives Matter. I am engaged. And I am enraged.

There is systemic racism toward the black community in this country. I honor the memories of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin, and the too many others who have been killed or harmed by the racism that persists in this country and continues to divide our society. Growing up as a child of the 60s, we thought we were making progress. As the Reverend Martin Luther King said in December of 1967 "There can be no justice without peace and there can be no peace without justice." There still is not justice, there still is not peace. Rampant racism still exists.

The color of our skin should not matter – we are all humans - we share a common humanity and a desire to live a meaningful life. We are born into this world as equals, with no say as to who our parents are or what color skin we have. None of this should matter – we should all have the same opportunities to make the best of our lives. But unfortunately, that is still not the reality in this country. Black citizens are not treated the same as others, and that is wrong. The peaceful protest march that was held in Los Altos last Friday made it clear that thousands of us here in Los Altos agree: Black Lives Matter. Racism has no place in this community and will not be tolerated. We must promote and continue to fight for freedom and justice.

This also applies to how the police treat citizens which I will discuss in a moment. This applies to the words we use in expressing ourselves. There is no place for racist speech, particularly among our elected officials, and this will not be tolerated in Los Altos.

I have received hundreds of emails from residents regarding the inappropriate words that have a racist history recently used by council member Jeannie Bruins at one of our council meetings in May. I do not condone such language. Hundreds of residents have further demanded that I, as the mayor, take action to remove Ms. Bruins from office. State election law does not provide for the mayor to remove any council member, nor for the council as a whole to remove any council member. I checked with our city attorney and she said, "there is no process and/or action the City Council can take to remove an elected official."

The brutal police killing of George Floyd and so many other black citizens is wrong and unjust. We cannot sit idly by when this kind of action continues to take place across our

country. We have received hundreds of emails from residents and others urging Los Altos to adopt the 8 Can't Wait policies and to defund the Los Altos police department.

Tonight I propose that Vice Mayor Fligor and I form an ad hoc committee to work diligently with Los Altos Police Chief Andy Galea, members of our community, and other city staff to ensure that our training, policies and practices reflect the values of our community. I propose that this subcommittee be in line with the call issued by President Obama to Mayors and other City Council officials to introduce common-sense limits on police use of force. The My Brother's Keeper Alliance is calling on mayors to commit to the following actions:

1. **REVIEW** your police use of force policies.
2. **ENGAGE** your communities by including a diverse range of input, experiences, and stories in your review.
3. **REPORT** the findings of your review to your community and seek feedback.
4. **REFORM** your community's police use of force policies.

The Vice Mayor and I will be coming back to the council at our next meeting on June 23 with a specific agenda item and a resolution outlining the goals and processes of this subcommittee's work. I hope that the council will fully support this proposal so that we can quickly get to work. This can start the process without delay.

As your mayor, I will do all that I can to promote justice in Los Altos – to fight for equality, to respect each other's humanity, and particularly to recognize that Black Lives Matter.

Thank you,



Mayor Jan Pepper
